

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004678

SIPDIS

CENTCOM FOR POLAD, J5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2013

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IT](#) [IZ](#) [IRAOI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY, IF ASKED, READY TO EXTEND IRAQ MISSION

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN
FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (C)

11. (U) DEFMIN MARTINO, SPEAKING TO THE PRESS IN NEW YORK ON OCTOBER 11, SAID ITALY WAS CONSIDERING EXTENDING ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN IRAQ FOR AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS. THE ITALIAN MISSION, DUBBED ANTICA BABILONIA, WAS AUTHORIZED ON JULY 10 BY A GOVERNMENT DECREE, WHICH PARLIAMENT SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED LATER IN THE MONTH. ITALY'S CURRENT DEPLOYMENT, TOTALING 2,800 MILITARY PERSONNEL (THE THIRD LARGEST COALITION MILITARY FORCE IN IRAQ), HAS FUNDING THROUGH DECEMBER 31.

12. (U) MARTINO ON OCTOBER 12, PRESSED FOR A CLARIFICATION BY AN ITALIAN NEWS REPORTER, SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH ITALY HAD NOT DECIDED TO EXTEND ANTICA BABILONIA, IT WAS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THE USG TO MAKE SUCH A REQUEST. HE ADDED THAT, IF ASKED, ITALY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REFUSE ITS CLOSE ALLY. MARTINO ALSO GUARANTEED THAT AN EVENTUAL DECISION TO EXTEND THE MISSION WOULD BE "BROUGHT BEFORE PARLIAMENT", WITHOUT SPECIFYING WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PUT THE MATTER TO A VOTE.

13. (SBU) MARTINO'S COMMENTS ELICITED A CONFUSED RESPONSE FROM THE OPPOSITION CENTER-LEFT. THE MORE EXTREME PARTIES (REFOUNDED COMMUNISTS, ITALIAN COMMUNISTS, AND GREENS) URGED AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF ITALIAN FORCES FROM IRAQ, WHILE OTHERS (DEMOCRATS OF THE LEFT, DAISY, AND ITALIAN SOCIALISTS) INDICATED THAT ITALIAN FORCES COULD REMAIN AFTER DECEMBER 31, BUT ONLY UNDER A UN MANDATE. NOTE: BECAUSE A FOLLOW-ON MISSION WOULD REQUIRE APPROXIMATELY 200-250 MILLION EUROS IN NEW FUNDING, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO AVOID ASKING PARLIAMENT FOR EXPLICIT APPROVAL. REGARDLESS, STRONG CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT FOR ANTICA BABILONIA WITHIN THE CENTER-RIGHT COALITION WOULD LIKELY ENSURE THE GOVERNMENT A FAVORABLE OUTCOME. END NOTE.

14. (C) COMMENT: MARTINO DOES NOT EXPECT AN IMMEDIATE INDICATION OF U.S. NEEDS IN IRAQ. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THROUGH HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS HE IS ASKING THE USG TO DECIDE IN A TIMELY MANNER WHETHER TO ASK ITALY FOR AN EXTENSION, AND TO COMMUNICATE ANY DECISION DIRECTLY TO HIM. MARTINO'S REFERENCE TO "SIX-MONTHS" WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY MEANT TO CONVEY THAT SUCH A LENGTH OF TIME WOULD BE POLITICALLY OPTIMAL. WE ASSUME THAT OUR MILITARY PLANNERS ARE EVALUATING POST DECEMBER 31 COALITION REQUIREMENTS. WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO MAKE A NEAR-TERM RECOMMENDATION ON HOW ITALY CAN BEST CONTRIBUTE TO IRAQ'S STABILIZATION SO THAT WE CAN CONVEY A FORMAL REQUEST TO MARTINO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. END COMMENT.

SEMBLER

NNNN

2003ROME04678 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL